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ABSTRACT

The use of classroom assessments in the context of the new assessment system for California schools, the California Learning Assessment System, is discussed by describing the California Learning Record (CLR). The CLR emphasizes the central role of teachers in equitable assessment of student learning for students of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The CLR documents a student profile based on three principles for assessing student progress: (1) use of multiple perspectives on students' progress; (2) use of multiple sources of information; and (3) use of multiple contexts of learning and instruction. The first section of the paper provides background information on the development of the CLR and some basic assumptions. The second section describes the CLR in use. Fairness and equity as principles guiding the development and use of assessments like the CLR are discussed in the third section, and in the fourth section, suggestions are made for integrating classroom assessment information with information from other components of the state assessment system. Implications are discussed for the professional development of teachers to help them assess students fairly. (Contains 16 references.) (SLD)

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Achieving Equity: Counting on the Classroom[1]

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This paper was prepared as a background paper to a demonstration of the *California Learning Record (CLR)* on March 11-12, 1993 at a symposium held in Washington, DC on "Equity and Educational Testing Assessment", sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the press grows for national goals, standards, curriculum and assessments, new assessments will be called upon to serve two purposes: the improvement of instruction and program accountability. Recognizing that no one assessment can serve both instructional and accountability purposes, state assessment programs are developing systems of authentic, performance-based assessments, comprised of multiple assessments of student performances. A key working principle for the development of new assessment practices is ensuring that assessments are fair and equitable for all students, including those with special needs and limited English proficiency.

In this paper we focus on the use of classroom assessments in the context of the new assessment system for California schools, the *California Learning Assessment System* (*CLAS*) by describing one approach to classroom assessment intended to inform instruction -- the *California Learning Record (CLR)*[2] The approach described herein emphasizes the central role of teachers in fair and equitable assessment of student learning. This paper is divided into five sections. The first section provides background on the development of the *CLR* and some basic assumptions. The second section provides a description of the *CLR* in use. Next, fairness and equity as principles guiding the development and use of classroom assessments, like the *CLR*, is discussed. In the fourth section, suggestions are made for integrating classroom assessment information with information from other components of the state assessment system. Finally, implications are discussed for the professional development

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[2] The *CLR* is adapted with permission from the *Primary Language Record (PLR)* (copyright, 1988, ILEA/Centre for Language in Primary Education. The PLR has been used in London elementary schools since 1985.

of teachers to assess student progress fairly and in ways that serve teaching and learning.

> ... I taught first grade at a Chapter 1 school...I had a prescribed script already written up for me which literally told the teachers what to say.. But then there was Margaret. Margaret was an African-American child with high energy who liked to talk, move and socialize while she learned -- except that my classroom set-up and prescribed curriculum demanded a quiet classroom with kids constantly on task with worksheets always solitary, individual activities. Margaret had been put in my lowest reading group -- a designation that I inherited from the teacher she had the year before. She struggled her way through our reading sessions, never passed the tests, not even with extra review. But during her seatwork time, when she had finished with the endless stream of worksheets, she almost always got a book from the library and would read it aloud with pleasure and loads of expression to an imaginary audience. I recognized her happy involvement, but constantly would tell her that she had to be quiet, because that was the tacit understanding at our mastery learning school -- that good little academic achievers spent a lot of quiet, solitary time on task." (Susan M., 1992)

Susan and other teachers are questioning the fairness and equity of traditional instructional assessment practices and their impact on classroom learning and teaching for all students. They are asking such questions as "On what tasks is time being spent? and "How well can Margaret read?" These prompt other questions: How valid and accurate is the evidence that Margaret was unable to read, especially since that evidence did not show what she did know and could do? What information did Margaret's test scores provide that would help Susan help this first grader to move from the lowest reading group?

Such questions have influenced the aims of reforms currently underway in educational testing and assessment practices. These aims focus on linking assessment to classroom practices in ways that genuinely (1) help all students learn to think, (2) help teachers understand how all students respond to instruction and (3) help teachers use this information in supporting all students as they develop new, increasingly complex ideas. The emphasis on all students, including those with special needs and limited English proficiency, is a radical

shift in direction with implications for re-thinking instructional and assessment practices. The national emphases on goals, standards, curriculum and assessments has forced changes in state educational programs and, in turn, has been changed by the direction of states. The classroom has been most intimately affected by state and national changes in instruction and assessment practices. In this paper, we focus on equity as it relates to instruction and educational assessments in the classroom.

Background, Some Assumptions and Issues

The changing demographics of students in California schools has added pressure to provide useful, valid assessments for all students. In 1992, over half of California's elementary school-age children were Hispanic, black, or Asian. Approximately one out of six students was born in another country. In addition, over 80 different language groups, with English as a second language, were represented by twenty-nine percent of the students entering kindergarten.

In this context, pressure has increased for classroom assessments that can be used by teachers to understand what students know and the strategies used by them to learn and understand new concepts. Cultural and linguistic differences inherent in learning have consequently become the concern of classroom teachers. These differences pervade important instructional decisions made by teachers, and how decision-making incorporates the culture and language of students.

The motivation for developing the classroom assessment approach of the *CLR* stems from three sources: the fundamental changes in all aspects of schooling, especially

instruction and assessment, called for by the recasting of the California curriculum frameworks; the total redesign of the student assessment system for California schools; and the new emphases on both success in the regular program and the attainment of basic and advanced skills for all Chapter 1 students (Public Law 100-297, Hawkins-Stafford Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1988).

Recasting of the California Curriculum Frameworks

In the 1980s, California's subject matter curriculum frameworks and model curriculum guides were recast to be consistent and congruent with current research on how students learn, commonly referred to as a "thinking curriculum" (see Resnick and Klopfer, 1990). An example of the new curriculum is provided in the *English-Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (California Department of Education, 1987, pp. 22, 25):

> ...Establishing revised curriculum standards and frameworks and reworking materials and textbooks are only the first important steps in improving English-language arts programs. Translating important principles into what happens between students and the teacher clearly becomes the next important issue. ... To design and implement an integrated [literature-based] curriculum for all students, well-trained teachers...must make dozens of important decisions about what happens daily in the classroom. The most effective learning environment is one in which the teacher and students expect that all students will become proficient in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an atmosphere in which each student feels important and shares responsibility for the group ... As they explore a work, students must also encounter strategies for thinking; that is, how to understand and how to compose, when to ask questions and how to answer them. ...Limited-English proficient students need a rich linguistic environment in which the use of repetitive skill-based work sheets and exercises is limited and frequent opportunities are provided for students to speak, listen, read, and write in meaningful contexts...

In trying to make the changes in how to teach and how to assess student progress called for in the curriculum frameworks, California public school teachers became increasingly aware that these changes were fundamental ones. In particular, these changes meant shifts in instruction and assessment from a skills-based program to a collaborative, student-centered, and experiential program. This shift can be seen in Susan M's description of her experiences with Margaret.

Along with teachers' recognition of the changes required to make instructional and assessment practices congruent with the curriculum frameworks, staff development was also recognized as essential to equipping teachers with the expertise necessary for translating the thinking curriculum. In 1988, a core development group of teachers, kindergarten to grade twelve, from throughout the state began to conduct their own classroom research on the use of teacher observation and judgment of student performance, adapting the work of inner London teachers in the *Primary Language Record* (*PLR*) (Barrs, Ellis, Hester, and Thomas, 1989) to the California schools context. In 1990, the California Department of Education initiated support for a three-year pilot study to determine the feasibility of using the *CLR* for assisting school districts to set local standards for Chapter 1 programs. Currently, approximately one hundred teachers from thirteen schools in San Diego City Unified School District and thirty teachers from Enterprise School District are participating in the pilot study. All participating schools are designated as school-wide project under Chapter 1. (A poverty level of seventy-five percent or greater of the student population must be demonstrated in the student population of each school to be eligible for designation as a school-wide project under Chapter 1).

Redesign of the California Assessment Program (CAP) and impact on instruction

Since the early 1980s, teachers in California have had a pivotal role in the development and successful implementation of the state testing program, known as the California Assessment Program (Mitchell, 1991). California's direct assessment of student writing[3], launched by the California Assessment Program in 1987 successfully influenced English-language arts curriculum throughout the state. CAP has had great impact statewide on instruction. A survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Writing at the University of California, Berkeley indicated that ninety four percent of the respondents felt that they had changed the way they taught writing, and seventy-eight percent reported that they assigned more writing. Moreover, ninety-six percent believed that students would write more, ninety-four percent believed that the curriculum would be strengthened and ninety-three percent believed that CAP would help implement California's English-Language Arts Framework. In 1989, the California Department of Education announced that the statewide assessments would change from multiple-choice tests to performance assessments. The *Final Report of the California Education Summit* (California Department of Education, 1989) stated that,

> ...The current approach to assessment of student achievement which relies on multiple-choice student response must be abandoned because of its deleterious effect on the educational process. An assessment system which measures student achievement on performance-based measures is essential for driving the needed reform toward a thinking curriculum for which students are actively engaged and successful in achieving goals in and beyond high school ...

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[3] Parallel efforts to develop more "authentic" assessments of students' performance have occurred in other content areas. Assessments in the content areas of mathematics, science, and history-social science have expanded to include reading, projects and investigations. (California Department of Education, 1993).

Through their participation in developing direct assessments of student performance and in the scoring of assessments, teachers developed a growing awareness of the types of assessment tasks that genuinely reflect the instructional activities desired in the classroom. In turn, teachers have increased their skills in "imbedding"assessment into classroom practices by learning how to make assessment ongoing and a part of classroom instruction. The impact of the CAP on instruction suggests that the right kind of large-scale implementation of instruction and assessment will increase the likelihood of a thinking curriculum for all students and reduce the likelihood of unnecessary sorting and ranking students.

In January, 1992, a new student assessment system, now called the *California Learning Assessment System* (*CLAS*) was mandated by the California State Legislature. The CLAS has three components based on assessment type: on-demand assessments, curriculum-embedded assessments, and portfolio assessments. Each component provides a different source of information for program accountability and for improving instruction. The on-demand component provides a "snapshot" of student peformance, or information on how well a student performs on a specific task in a given time period. The curriculum-embedded component provides information regarding student performance on a set of standardized performance tasks such as projects or investigations that can be used as performance benchmarks. The portfolio component provides continuous, ongoing information on student performance throughout the school year, based on samples of student work.

New Emphases of Chapter 1

In the 1988 reauthorization of Chapter 1 (P.L. 100-297, Hawkins-Stafford elementary

and Secondary Education Improvement Amendments of 1988), new emphases in the Chapter 1 program focused on a "thinking curriculum" for Chapter 1 students by setting goals for success in the regular program, attainment of grade-level proficiency and achievement of basic and advanced skills. State and districts were encouraged to use measures in addition to norm-referenced tests, such as portfolio assessments to improve instruction. To bring about these changes in instruction and assessment practices, the flexibilities in the Chapter 1 program were designed to provide staff development for teachers and to allow for the use of more authentic measures of student performance in addition to norm-referenced tests. The California Department of Education has supported school districts in developing their capacities to use authentic assessments as part of the district's educational program, including Chapter 1 programs. As one of several portfolio assessment approaches to aligning Chapter 1 programs with the state curriculum frameworks, the *CLR* supports the efforts of teacher to use assessment on an ongoing basis to understand students' responses to instruction and determine next steps.

Some assumptions and issues and the CLR

In terms of the classroom, these shifts in curriculum and assessment suggest that good assessments must reflect the purposes of the curriculum. Classroom practices grow out of the personal, cultural and pedagogical experiences of teachers -- they reflect belief systems. Such assessments, designed to map good instruction, include daily informal practices

> "in which teachers create environments in which students can succeed, and parents support their children's progress as part of evaluation. Tests will be designed to help

> all students, and assessment will be structured to assess students strengths and accomplishments, not simply weaknesses or failures.Good assessment also will provide direction for the teacher, identifying what students have learned and what progress they have made (California Department of Education, 1987, p. 33)

The constructivist nature of the model of learning posited in the California English-Language Arts Framework rests on the following assumptions: 1) intelligence develops (2) students' skills are culturally defined and (3) students' skills grow through substantive interactive experiences with others. Classroom assessments compatible with these assumptions, like the CLR, require a shift in how teachers think about the connections between assessment and instruction. The "ideal" assessment under development here is the mind of the teacher.

The *CLR* provides a structure and process for these changes. In our earlier example, Susan M. points out how the instructional practices used with Margaret were inconsistent with these assumptions. Interaction was minimal; Margaret's reading activity was restricted to completing worksheets. This type of instructional activity presumes that meaning is passively incorporated by the reader, without active engagement about what is read with peers. Margaret's behavior and self-report suggests that she has another meaning of what reading is for -- her own enjoyment. In retrospect, Susan, who wrote her description two years following her initial use of the *CLR*, was disturbed by the memory of this grader whose natural, albeit different learning style was disregarded by the exiting instructional system.

The *CLR*, like the *PLR*, incorporates certain psychological and pedagogical principles: the involvement of parents, students, all teachers who teach the students, and particularly, the involvement of students with special needs. In addition, respect is given to the importance of recording students' progress in the other languages they know as well as in English and

the developments of students across the curriculum in the range of language modes (talking, listening, reading and writing). In both the observations and judgments made in the recordings, the nature of contexts of learning and teaching is emphasized, as a one part of framework for evaluating students' progress in language. In later sections of this paper, we provide illustrations of each principle.

A Description of the *CLR* Approach

The *CLR* documents a student profile based emphasis on three principles for assessing student progress: use of multiple perspectives on students' progress, multiple sources of information and multiple contexts of learning and instruction. The record is a system for recording what students can do, kindergarten through twelfth grade, in developing oral language, literacy, and numeracy abilities. Teachers document their observations of students' progress with samples of student work as well as what parents say their children can do in the home; they also record what students themselves say about what they are learning to do. Information about students' progress is gathered throughout the year, using multiple sources of information, ranging from conferences with teachers and students, samples of students reading, writing, speaking and talking, the types of books shared and read by the student, informal reading and writing assessments, anecdotal records of student behavior. (A graphic illustration of the flow of teaching, learning and assessment is found in Figure 1). Finally, teachers observe how students behave in multiple contexts of learning, both social and play. Through their observations they judge how students respond to instruction and assist them with relevant instruction needed to support students' in their

learning. Teacher judgments are subsequently applied using a reading scale. *Reading Scale 1* (see Appendix A) is a five-level scale, emphasizing developing reading fluency and the growing independence of readers; it is intended for students in grades kindergarten through third grade. *Reading Scale 2* (see Appendix B) s intended for students from grade 4 through middle schools and focuses on the impact of instruction on the students' developing reading fluency. Both reading scales contextualize literacy development by incorporating the students' of primary language and the students' use of English as a second language in relation to determining the students' progress as a reader. At the end of the school year, each student and parent has a completed record, i.e., a record of achievement which summarizes the student's accomplishments at the end of the year and how that work can be built on the following year.

To illustrate this approach to connecting assessment with instruction through teacher observation, we provide an example of Susan's observations of a kindergarten-age student, Edith. In this example, she uses her experiences with five-year-old Edith to illustrate her use of the *CLR* to assess reading.

Edith is a kindergartener in a K-1 "sheltered English" classroom in a Chapter 1 schoolwide program. This particular class has been set up for students who come to school speaking English as a second language. Students in the class speak Spanish, Tagalog or Croatian as their primary languages. At the beginning of the year, Susan recorded what Edith's mother had to say about Edith's learning at home with her African-American father, her Spanish-speaking mother, and her three younger sisters:

> Edith's mother says she loves to listen to cassettes and has just ordered her a new one from the Book Club. Edith picks her own books from the library -- she loves books -

> - and wants to learn how to read. She's always asking her mother, "What does this say?" --wants to be read to often, plays school and reading with her younger sisters. Speaks Spanish to her sisters, gives them directions on how to do this or that. Mom speaks Spanish to Edith as well.

Recordings of what Edith observes about herself as a learner at this early point in the year were made:

> Edith says she wants to learn to read. She especially likes the book, *My Pictionary*, because it has words with the pictures. She says she has to do many things for her sisters. She can speak Spanish and English and is teaching English to her sisters. She also likes to write at home, can write her numbers and ABCs.

Near the end of the year, a summary of the observations and anecdotal records made about Edith's work in the classroom. Regarding Edith's reading development, Susan writes:

> Edith began the year as a Non-fluent Reader on Reading Scale 1 and could tackle familiar text with ease. Throughout the year, I frequently discovered her rereading books on her own which we had read together as a class. She can read fluently *Dr. Seuss's ABCs*; *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*; a variety of poems and parts of *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. She knows a wide variety of Mother Goose rhymes and has shared many other poems and songs with the class which she has learned at home. She listens avidly to books read aloud and responds in a variety of ways. She is moving confidently into the range of a Moderately Fluent Reader.

After surveying the narrative account of Edith's progress during the year, summarized in the Record, her father responded by writing these comments directly on the Record:

> We are very pleased with Edith's progress in her class. You cannot improve on having the very best because that's what she has right now with her teachers and school. Thank you for a job well done!

With Edith, Susan summarized what Edith herself told her she had liked best about the year:

> Edith said she liked writing in different colors, using different kinds of crayons and marker pens. She also enjoyed *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* best, because as she says, "I know how to read it and sing it." She also enjoyed writing rhymes that she could read in her literature log.

As to what would help Edith with her reading as she moves into first grade, more experiences with text are suggested:

> Edith continues to prosper through an exposure to a wide range of books both at school and at home. Allowing her to write her own books has reinforced her reading skills and continued to engage her interest and promote her progress.

Emphasizing the support at home that Edith has, for talk and listening as well as with reading, Susan recommends to next year's teacher that Edith, is now developing an understanding of the correspondence between sounds of words and their printed forms as a result of having had successful experiences with books.

> She has already started her own collection of books and tapes which she knows by heart. As she learns new stories and songs, I would now encourage her to make regular connections between the words she speaks and the letters on the page. She already has a good foundation for this.

In order to arrive at the conclusions that were reached about Edith's progress in learning to read in the example above, observations of what Edith could do were documented five times during the year. The summary quoted above was based on the observations of Susan in addition to all the teachers who were involved in Edith's instruction.

Edith's progress was assessed using *Reading Scale 1*. Based on Susan's observations and conferences with Edith's parents and with Edith, Edith is described as beginning her kindergarten year at the second level on the five point scale, the non-fluent reader level, and ended the year "beginning to explore new kinds of texts independently," an indication, according to the scale, that she is moving to the moderately fluent reader level. Although she is not yet using phonics cues to construct meaning from unfamiliar text, she appears ready to add this strategy to other cueing strategies that she possesses.

In Edith's case, the teacher's judgments and observations are documentation of what and how Edith learns.

Equity and Fairness and Classroom Assessments

The greatest challenge facing the development and use of classroom assessments such as the *CLR* is ensuring fairness in the use of teacher judgments to measure student progress. Ensuring fairness and equity in using classroom assessments based on teacher judgment means that students' progress as reflected by the academic accomplishments of all students, including those from cultural, ethnic, and language minority groups, must be fully and accurately recorded throughout the school year and from one year to the next. In evaluating equity and fairness in the use of the assessments, several important principles have guided teachers' practices in using the *CLR*. The principles emphasize: imbedding of assessment into curriculum to incorporate contexts of learning; building on the diversity of students' experiences, including language diversity; providing for multiple opportunities to learn; requiring multiple sources of information by which to assess students' progress; requiring multiple sources of information by which to assess performance; and using informed teacher judgment to assess students' progress. A discussion of the ways in which each of these principles contributes to fair assessments of students' progress follows.

Imbedding of assessment into curriculum to ensure contexts for learning

Learning is conditioned by the context in which it occurs and shaped by the expectations of students, parents and teachers. Effective assessments of student learning

must be sensitive to contexts of learning. By incorporating the expectations of students, parents and teachers for students' progress and for instruction, the process of conferencing and observing students' progress establishes a context for achievement. This process in which assessment and instruction interact also provides a scaffold for learning activities in which students exercise independence in how and what they learn. It encourages students to use the community experiences they bring to school as well as those they have in school in the performance of rigorous tasks. Imbedding assessment in these kinds of curricular contexts directs instruction to serve students' learning.

The changing demographics in California described earlier in this paper suggests that all classrooms will soon, if not now, be populated by many students speaking a variety of languages and by many students learning English as a second language. Therefore, cultural and linguistic differences inherent in learning can no longer be solely the responsibility of bilingual, ESL, and language arts teachers. Cazden (1988) suggests that , because we "see through" our language , we may ascribe a lack of scholastic ability to unconventional or unexpected student responses when what they really reflect is inexperience or a similarity of experience in either the first or the second language. It is this transparency of classroom discourse which frequently puts students at disadvantage, especially those with special needs who may be less familiar than their mainstream peers with English and/or with the language of school. The language of the teacher, for example, may be more formal than that used at home, turn-taking in classroom conversations more complicated, and acceptable topics for talk considerably more restricted. The arbitrary separation of assessment from life outside the school may deny cultural and language minority students the comprehensible contexts for

them to use their prior knowledge and their linguistic abilities to make sense. It differs markedly from the skills-based emphasis of Susan M.'s classroom described in the introduction to this paper.

Margaret's classroom reading behavior ("... she almost always got a book from the library and would read it aloud with pleasure and loads of expression to an imaginary audience") contrasted sharply with her test taking behavior ("...never passed the tests, not even with extra review."). Although Susan recognized "her happy involvement" in reading, she wanted Margaret to succeed so she put her own judgment aside. In this case, the assessment is, indeed, imbedded in instruction. The problem lies in the fact that instruction and learning have narrowly focused on fragmented skills. Though Margaret failed the tests which measured reading achievement indirectly through decontextualized vocabulary and phonics items in a multiple-choice format, she could read aloud real books selected from the library "with pleasure and loads of expression."

Assessments, especially classroom assessments, must place value on fundamental understandings about learning, e.g., in reading, that readers construct meaning from print. Therefore, teachers use the *CLR* to observe and document the kinds of signals Margaret was sending as she engaged in reading tasks: that she enjoyed the books she chose; that she could read aloud with expression. These signs when documented, provide evidence that learners are constructing meaning in ways that are culturally relevant. Information gathered in this way assists teachers to intervene when classroom tasks are not providing the right kinds of experience for the learner. For example, Margaret's failure on a test would have been documented as an inadequacy in the instructional program, and Susan would have

shifted her attention to fostering Margaret's learning strengths instead of insisting on compliance with what was not working.

Building on the diversity of students' experience, including language

Assessments of authentic student achievements must recognize diversity, relevance and authenticity of the knowledge students bring to school, that is, their prior and outside-of-school experience. Because it acknowledges and builds on the prior experience of students, the *CLR* is especially sensitive to the needs of students outside the dominate culture. The incorporation of parent observations about the student's learning at home prevents, or at least minimizes, the disjuncture between home and school felt by many students and their families. Edith's biracial and bilingual background for example, became her strength when Susan helped her use what she learned to do at home in classroom activities.

Language is central in rethinking instruction and assessment practice. The theoretical framework of the *CLR* recognizes the central role of language and literacy in academic success. Language -- whether read, written, spoken or heard -- is the symbol system we use to particularize segments of reality, to generalize from them and to reflect on their significance and share them with others. The stories we tell ourselves about our life experiences, whether memorable personal incidents or our interpretations of the texts we read, create the reality from which we view the world. The words we use to characterize ourselves are those we hear from others. Talking about the world represents that world or culture to us. Certainly, writing and reading dominates teaching and learning in schools. History lessons are mediated through the language of the text, of the teacher, and of the

student. Concepts in science and mathematics are manifested in written and oral language. Perhaps more important than the communication to someone else of what has already been learned, however, is the ongoing communication within oneself between the external world of ideas and sensations and the internal world of prior experience and meaning-construction, that is, the verbal expression of what one is learning.

The research basis for the explicit attention to language in learning began with Britton's synthesis of language and learning theories in *Language and Learning* (1970). More lip service than real enactment has been given those theories, however (Healy and Barr, 1991). With the consensus within the subject matter fields that the construction of meaning by each student must become the focus of instruction, the time may have come, however, for the intertwining nature of language and thought to be acknowledged and given primacy in learning goals and activities -- and, consequently, in assessment.

Language, especially one's primary language, shapes meaning, for it carries with it the concreteness of one's own experience from birth. Language, personally and culturally grounded, serves thought. Britton (1970) describes the process: "As [the learner] verbalizes what is happening, both the events, as he perceives them, and the verbalization are open to his examination (p. 104)". And it is the examination of one's own response to experience which leads to reflection upon both these events and the prior knowledge about similar ones. In school, the "events", unfortunately, at least for students like Margaret, are often to be found solely in text or teacher talk, and the prior knowledge of many students remains unverbalized and, therefore untapped.

Because our primary language accompanies our intellectual and social growth from

the womb, it is naturally the most available instrument for discovering, clarifying and examining our thinking. Some say this personal language is as close to each of us as our skin (Torbe and Medway, 1981). In school, as we come in contact with a broader swath of cultures, all of us expand our native dialects, some acquire other languages; and we all begin to use other symbol systems, including numbers, graphs, diagrams and written language with all their conventions. The forms of discourse--whether for private, explorative purposes or for public, formulated ones--extend our entree into the disciplines. To oversimplify: in science, observation, speculation and persuasion are the kinds of thinking which predominate; in history, biography, evaluation and report; in literature, poetry, drama, story and interpretation. And all of these kinds of thinking, whether spoken, read or written, reveal how and what students are learning. The *CLR* captures the essence of student thought in its formative stages, so that teachers can intervene if necessary , as well as in its formulated or production stage, so teachers and others can evaluate the quality of the finished work. Both process and product can be observed and documented.

The structure and processes provided by the *CLR* supports teachers as they encourage their students to struggle with ideas in a variety of social and learning contexts. Collaborative learning, now generally accepted by teachers as a way to open up the curriculum for all students, gains much of its power from the way it encourages the flow of oral language to surround and permeate ideas presented by the teacher, text or peer. Using the anecdotal recording system provided by the *CLR*, teachers listen and observe students as they engage in such tasks as writing observation journals, talking and listening in paired or small group discussion about class readings, and dramatizing passages, problems, and scenes

from all kinds of text.

Susan, encouraged by the use of the *CLR* to listen to Edith in a variety of learning and social contexts, found that she is proficient in both English and Spanish. Near the end f the year she wrote into a part of Edith's record not included in this paper that Edith could "switch mid-sentence or throughout to either language depending on her audience or topic". Knowing how important Edith's confidence, experience, skill, and knowledge are to her ability to learn more, Susan added, "She understands the importance of being bilingual and knows it is valuable to participants in both language communities represented by the paternal and material sides of her family and by the school." Edith's bilingualism is an important linguistic and learning strength, and the *CLR* permits it to be seen as such.

Providing for multiple opportunities to learn

Because the *CLR* proceeds from a base of learning through language and literacy, it ensures that all learners, including those who are not succeeding academically, will have extensive experience with text of all kinds, reading it, writing it, discussing it. A range of contexts for learning are incorporated in the CLR. By observing and recording student progress according to the observational prompts, samples of students' responses to a variety of instructional approaches are documented. Information regarding students' responses to instruction is then used to inform and redesign instruction. The narrative accompanying the levels of *Reading Scale 2* also provides descriptors of the impact of instruction on students' progress as readers and the students' opportunities to learn the content covered by instruction and assessment. Exemplars of student performance at each level of the scale are used by

teachers to illustrate the type and degree of access to good instruction experienced by students.

Using multiple sources of information to assess student learning

Parents, teachers and students themselves contribute information to the record of achievement collected throughout the year. Parent contributions have proved extremely valuable to teachers as clues to helping students relate the learning they do at home to their learning at school. Teachers also record what students say about their learning, in their lives outside of school as well as their scholastic experience. In elementary, the classroom teacher is responsible for keeping the record but all school staff members who deal with the student may also contribute their own insights into the on-going profile of student development. In secondary, each academic subject area teacher is responsible for summarizing and recording achievement but students are given more responsibility for collecting the evidence of the extent and nature of their learning.

The *CLR* provides for multiple opportunities for learners to exhibit specific behaviors described holistically by performance scales. Susan's collection of observations about Edith's reading behavior in informal situations in the classroom was buttressed by three formal accounts of her reading of specified texts conducted throughout the year. The observations conducted in August, November and April. were documented in the form of brief notes describing specific accomplishments demonstrated by Edith while working on classroom tasks. On April 29, for instance, Edith was "writing 'Hey Diddle, Diddle' and Susan noted, "Can read it aloud and pick out any word I ask." The formal accounts show

what Edith could do with specific texts, the first two known to her through classwide readings, the final one unknown. Al three texts were written in English. The first three accounts shows Edith as a reader who is beginning to orchestrate the many strategies required in reading (e.g., using pictures as well as linguistic cues) with predictable text (*Five Little Pumpkins*). Her confidence in the task is evident in that she read with "expression and rhythm" and that she told Susan she enjoys reading and wants to be a successful reader. With these behaviors noted, Susan assigns herself the task of ensuring that Edith continue with a variety of reading experiences. The third account, conducted late in the year, features an unknown text, *The Monsters' Party*, which Edith "approached with interest and confidence, motivated right away". The fact that she "seemed to be having fund", "started reading right away" and asked for help verified Susan's judgment about her confidence. As to the strategies Edith applied to her reading, the record show that she is drawing on several strategies for unlocking meaning from print symbols: "She looked carefully at the words, looked ahead to the next page, mostly used the pictures" instead of phonics to "figure out what the text said".

With documented evidence to support her judgment, collected over the year from performance in a variety of situations with a variety of texts, Susan could be sure that Edith's reading ability had grown from Level 2 (non-fluent reader) on the reading scale for beginning readers, *Reading Scale 1*, to Level 3 (moderately fluent reader), as she noted in her summary of progress. The difference between the levels accords with reading development in that learners typically progress from learning to use reading strategies with familiar text to applying them in reading new text. The student's confidence and enjoyment

are a documented as a dynamic of progress. The record, by providing for the organized collection of teacher observations on what students show they can do in a variety of contexts, allows teachers to identify patterns of learning which they can support or redirect.

Using informed teacher judgment of student performance

Great care has been taken to ensure that teachers involved in the development and implementation of the *CLR* come from the cultural, ethnic and language minority groups represented in California's school population. However, this has been difficult to achieve. Although over fifty-two percent of California's student population is made of ethnic and language minority groups, less than eleven percent of the teaching force comes from similar ethnic and language minority groups (California Department of Education, 1990). Greater involvement of teachers from these underrepresented groups is essential to increasing informed teacher judgment of student performance. Through involvement of teachers in developing new practices in assessments and instruction, criteria for judging student achievement is made public. Teachers also benefit from their involvement as developers by increasing their expertise and confidence in doing the right kinds of assessments. Another benefit is the use of a common language for faculty to use among themselves as well as with parents and students about learning expectations and achievement. A deeper benefit is the internalization of standards for instruction and for judging student performance

Integrating Classroom Assessments with State Assessment Systems

The new *CLAS* for instance, builds on what is taught and

what is tested by initiating a three-part system of assessment whereby tests for accountability are linked with classroom-based assessment to provide a profile of information about student achievement from different perspectives or purposes. The "on-demand," public accountability part of the assessment supports instruction in that it is performance-based with authentic texts, chosen by teachers for their appeal at the designated grade levels. These teachers have also constructed performance criteria which mirror, as well as test conditions permit, the reading and writing processes. For example, students at Grade 4, are asked to read silently an excerpt from a story called "Stone Fox" by John Gardiner. As they read, they are encouraged to annotate or mark on the text; then they write and/or draw responses to questions which ask them first to connect their understandings about the story to their own experiences. Questions then guide them to reflect deeply on what the story means. The purpose is not to lead to a single interpretation but to a reasoned one based on the students' own experience, in life and with other literature, as well as in the singular experience of this one story.

Margaret would, like Edith, have been prepared for this model of reading performance assessment if she, like Edith, had been supported in the reading and discussion of whole and engaging texts instead of the constant testing and test-preparation teaching. If she had been encouraged to read widely and to demonstrate her growing fluency in various ways with a variety of texts, both the *CLAS* and the *CLR* would have documented just what and how she was progressing toward becoming an independent and experienced reader. A clearly articulated definition of reading is common to both. The *CLAS*, for example, defines reading in the same way the *CLR* does, as a "process of constructing meaning through

transactions with the text".

In this view of reading, the individual reader assumes the responsibility for interpreting the text, guided not only by the language of the text but also by the personal experiences, cultural experiences, and prior knowledge that the reader brings to the task. Rather than believing that the meaning resides solely within the words on the page, this view of reading emphasizes the role of the individual reader in making meaning through a process that brings together textual and contextual evidence and distinctive experience and perspective of the reader as meaning-maker.

The *CLR* reading scales operationalize this definition by framing the teacher's observation of student performance (in this illustration, reading performance) along continua of five dimensions of learning, as students perform daily classroom tasks. The first of the five dimensions is that of *confidence and independence* of the learner, or, in this case, the reader. Independent readers are willing to risk error as they assume responsibility constructing meaning from print symbols. Teachers who observe that students are increasingly able to ask questions about what and how they are reading and to make choices about what they want to read know that they are witnessing indicators of the developing confidence and independence necessary to tackling complex reading tasks. Susan saw that Edith was tackling many different kinds of texts on her own, another sign of confidence and independence.

Another dimension of learning to read is the reader's *use of prior experience* to make sense of text, i.e., the reader laughs or shows surprise at a character's foibles or the reader explains how a circumstance in the story or article compares with one in his or her life. As

the reader matures, more and more connections with other texts also serve as indicators that readers are relating their own lives to what they read. Edith brought stories and songs from home to share and rereads class stories on her own, connecting experience so she can move ahead.

A third dimension deals with the use of *skills and strategies*. Do students demonstrate they can read with increasing ease and fluency across a range of kinds of text (e.g., literary, persuasive, expressive) at increasingly sophisticated levels? Do they know what to do when confronted by unfamiliar, challenging text? Susan noted that Edith was using picture clues for the most part to make sense out of new text.

Students who *apply specific knowledge and understanding* to their reading of text demonstrate that they can transfer what they know to different contexts, thereby expanding and validating that knowledge. In reading, students must be ever more able to summon what they learn in one text or situation in order to solve a dilemma or challenge posed in another. Susan recorded that Edith related her own writing and song texts to her reading.

The fifth and final dimension in learning is the *ability to reflect* on one's own learning. Student readers need to become increasingly able to describe how and what they are learning to read, according to authentic criteria appropriate to their developmental level. The goal here is for students to develop self-judgment about reading achievement, i.e., be able to say what they do well and what they need to work on next.

The *CLR* supports teachers as they restructure their classrooms to encourage their students to struggle with ideas. Collaborative learning, now generally accepted by teachers as a way to open up the curriculum for all students, gains much of its power from the way it

encourages the flow of personal, expressive language to surround and permeate ideas presented by teacher, text, or peer. Using the anecdotal recording system provided by the *CLR*, they have the opportunity to listen and observe students as they engage in such tasks as writing observation journals, talking and listening in paired or small group discussion about class readings, and dramatizing passages, problems, and scenes from all kinds of text.

The reading scales of the *CLR* provide descriptive narrative of specific behaviors expected of learners who are performing at various of levels. Documentation of Edith's growth from Level 2 (Non-Fluent Reader) to Level 3 (Moderately Fluent Reader) is based on a series of observations of her reading behaviors. In addition to these ongoing observations, specific observations at three points in the year, November, March and June, were made. These accounts of Edith's reading behavior describe her interaction with known and unknown texts. all three texts were written in English. The first of the three accounts shows Edith as a reader who is beginning to orchestrate the many strategies required in reading (e.g., using pictures as well as linguistic cues) with predictable text (*Five Little Pigs*). Her confidence in the task is evident and she continues to enjoy reading. The task for Edith's instruction is to provide a variety of reading experiences. The third account centers on a text unknown to Edith. Edith's approach to the text, noted by Susan -- "with interest and confidence, motivated right away" -- affirmed Susan's judgment regarding her confidence as a reader. Finally, the record show that Edith is drawing on several strategies for unlocking meaning from print symbols: "She looked carefully at the words, looked ahead to the next page, mostly used the pictures' instead of phonics to "figure out what the text said". Through the organized collection of teacher observations what students' behaviors in a variety of contexts,

teachers are able to identify patterns of learning to encourage and redirect.

Implications for Staff Development

The changes desired in the educational assessment and testing reforms place significant responsibilities on teachers. In a recent survey, approximately one hundred-fifty teachers participating in the *CLR* project responded to questions regarding the use of the *CLR* in the classroom and the effects of its use on teaching and assessment practices. As a group the teachers reported that understanding the critical role of language and literacy in students' progress was key realization. Teachers' specifically cited this effect as due to their actively documenting a parent's observations of a student's learning at home and the noting of discrepancies between the student's performance in the home and in the classroom. This example highlighted for the teachers a disjuncture related to language and cultural differences between home and school felt by students and their families.

A second and related finding of the survey was that of the teachers' deliberate efforts to imbed assessments into instructional activities in the classroom. As a result of documenting their observations of students, teachers reported that they intentionally used students' responses to instructional activities in ways to determine subsequent instruction. One benefit noted was that of being able to use information about students' difficulties to help them make corrections in instruction. A problem cited by the teachers was that of developing ways to manage the recording of observations and teaching and dividing attention between learning management of observation and teaching.

Obviously, teachers will need staff development to carry out the instruction and

assessment practices of a thinking curriculum Preliminary findings of our research on staff development suggests that the approach to classroom assessment described in this paper is a radical departure from present practice for most teachers. Few of our teachers are prepared by their teacher preparation programs to effectively use classroom assessments such as the *CLR* to assist them in redesigning instruction. The following elements should be considered in the design of staff development to support similar approaches: experienced leadership, a phased-in, multi-year effort, experiential-based curriculum, and a support network. Experienced leadership will require the cultivation of teachers as they develop their skills. Teachers in Chapter 1 and bilingual education programs are often the first to recognize the benefits for students provided by classroom assessment approaches like the *CLR*. As experience among teachers grows, leadership can be developed to elaborate other aspects of the program. Staff development will need to be a phased-in, multi-year effort. An experientially-based curriculum for staff development should be used, where it is possible for teachers use their observations of students learning as well as student work samples to question their practice and to interpret research findings. A network of teachers who are learning and using classroom assessment should be offered. Through the network, teachers share their work and developments. Records, for example, could be shared, collected and distributed in a cycle of teaching, learning and assessment of practice.

Susan's reflections on her experience with the *CLR*, as well as those of hundreds of other California teachers who have shared such reflections with us, have deepened our understanding that the teacher is the one who must make performance assessment equitable and workable. As Susan herself demonstrates, teachers who se the need to change their

practices to include rigorous assessment like the *CLR* will require the support of professional development which recognizes then as professional leaders and learners. Susan's reflection, given below, help to illustrate the mind of the teacher who is actively addressing equity issues in her own assessment practices. These particular thoughts were written in January of 1992, midway through Susan's second year of professional development work with the *CLR*:

> ... The record provided just the right framework and assessment base for helping me to structure the learning environment and curriculum. It opened my eyes to the value of student choices and new ways for teachers to look at students. After a year of reading about and working with the CLR/PLR I knew I had to return to the classroom -- "to live among the people" as the anthropologists say -- to get my hands into the stuff that would inform me about students and how they learn and how I need to guide them...Going back in, I made a commitment to two things! No worksheets and no unnecessary restriction of student talk and movement. I wanted to create not only a physical, but also a social environment in which students could have a variety of choices, use a variety of languages, work with whomever and however they chose. Right now, I've been 6 months in with a K/1 (and may be soon be expanded to K-2) sheltered English classroom for Limited English Proficient students...There's still a great deal I haven't figured out yet --next year at this time I want to be more systematic in my observations. I need to continue to internalize the five dimensions of learning so that I can better provide the scaffolding that students need in a more immediate way -- on the spot, so to speak -- so that I have a better idea about what they need to stretch and grow and how I, as an educator, can best foster that development.

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